

Analyzing the Difficulties Faced by Iraqi EFL Learners in Applying Cooperative Learning

Rusul Assim Abood

English Department / College of Basic Education /University of Babylon

Rusul.assim@yahoo.com

Submission date: 31/12/2018 Acceptance date: 14/1/2019 Publication date: 24/3 /2019

Abstract

The researcher focuses on cooperative learning in English foreign language (EFL) classroom. One of the difficulties in the cooperative learning is that there is no exact definition for it. So, the term is viewed as a structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a specific and product or goal through people working together in group.

Cooperative learning can be effective and also successful inside the classroom, but it always comes with problems. For example the teacher have a real problem in giving each student in the group his final mark, and putting in a consideration that the students may have not the right contribution and in equal way in the group.

Key words: Learning, Cooperative Learning, Procedure of teaching

تحليل الصعوبات التي تواجه المتعلمين العراقيين في تطبيق التعلم التعاوني

رسل عاصم عبود

قسم اللغة الانكليزية/ كلية التربية الأساسية /جامعة بابل

الخلاصة

يركز الباحث على التعلم التعاوني في الفصول الدراسية للغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية ومن إحدى الصعوبات في التعلم التعاوني هي أنه لا يوجد أي تعريف دقيق لذلك. لذا، يعتبر المصطلح تركيب لتفاعل الطلاب والذي يهدف إلى تسهيل إنجازات محددة ومنتجة أو الهدف من خلال أشخاص يعملون معا في مجموعة. التعلم التعاوني يمكن أن يكون فعال وناجح أيضا داخل الفصول الدراسية، ولكن دائما يأتي مع المشاكل. على سبيل المثال يكون لدى المعلم مشكلة حقيقية في إعطاء كل طالب في المجموعة علامته النهائية، ووضع في عين الاعتبار أن الطلاب قد لا تساهم بطريقة متساوية في المجموعة.

الكلمات الدالة: التعلم، التعاوني، إجراء تعليمي

1- Section one

1-1 The Problem

Cooperative learning can be effective and also successful inside the classroom, but it always comes with problems. for example the teacher have a real problem in giving each student in the group his final mark, and putting in a consideration that the students may have not the right contribution and in equal way in the group. another problem is how to divided up cooperative activities. also not all students work perfectly with others and this may cause conflict inside the group.

Also the teacher might not be comfortable because of the noise of students during their discussions inside their group, so that the teacher can not manage the classroom in a good way.

1.2 Aims of the study

- 1- To organize the classroom activities
- 2- Informing the learners the advantages of cooperative learning
- 3- Discovering what the students know about cooperative learning .

1.3 Procedures

- 1- Researcher organizes the students into groups of 1-4 students , the teacher poses a question to the class and the students put their heads together to discuss the answer.
- 2- The researcher will ask the students inside the group to write his own answer on his paper and share it with his team.
- 3- When everyone in the group is ready, the researcher says " showdown "
- 4- The team members compare and discuss their answers.

1.4 The hypotheses

- 1- The lack of the use of cooperative learning inside the classroom.
- 2- The students are not much cooperative with each other.

1.5 Limits

In this study the participants are the learners, they are about 25 students from the fourth stage in English department, collage of education / university of kufa .

2- Section Two

2.1 Definitions of Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning " means the instructional use of small groups of students, so the students work together to achieve a common academic goal " [1].

"Cooperative learning can be characterized as a social process in which knowledge is acquired through the successful interaction between the group members" [2].

On the other hand, cooperative learning could be defined as the process of teaching the students in different groups[3].

Another definition is that cooperative learning is the technique that motivate the students to work together [4].

Cooperative learning is the procedure which make the students cooperate with each other to learn what they need[5] .

2.2 Types of Cooperative Learning

There are three types of cooperative learning each one is recognized by its aims and features as shown below [6].

2.2.1 Formal Cooperative Learning

Formal cooperative learning consists of students of the same class working together, to achieve shared learning goals and specific tasks. informal cooperative learning the teacher's role different from informal cooperative learning .

2.2.2 Informal Cooperative Learning

Informal cooperative learning consists of students study together to achieve shared learning goal in temporary. it lasts from few minutes to one class period. it also can be used to focus student attention on the material to be learning .

2.2.3 Cooperative Base Groups

Cooperative base groups are long-term, dissimilar cooperative learning groups with stable membership .

2.3 Teacher's Role in Cooperative Learning

The first important role of the teacher in cooperative learning is to motivate the student's participation inside the classroom in order to improve their learning , and this is educational practices .

Also the teacher try to depend on cooperative learning to reinforcing interactions among students and implying them in learning process.

3- Section three**3.1 Design of the Study**

This study was applied on students of 4th stage in English department to prove that cooperative learning is better than traditional taught class.

3.2 Pilot of the Study

Throughout the questionnaire which introduced to 25 Iraqi EFL students in 4th stage at English department in Kufa university, we have noticed that the cooperative learning class according to students and their opinions and answers in the questionnaire is better than traditional or regular taught class . the questionnaire comprising 2 questions only .

It designed to show student's opinion toward cooperative learning and also to prove that cooperative learning is more favorable than traditional taught class.

3.3 Participants of the Study

The participant in this study consisted of 25 Iraqi EFL students chosen randomly from the 4th stage in English department (males and females) they were asked to complete the questionnaire.

3.3.1 The Learners

We've applied this study on a group of students of 4th stage in English department, we have 25 students or learners (male/ female).

The number of male in the 4th stage less than the female, so we have only one male as well as 24 female chosen to complete the questionnaire.

3.4 Tools of the Study**3.4.1 The Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was introduced to 25 Iraqi EFL students of 4th stage at English department at faculty of education. it consisted of two major sections only. the first section indicate personal information which are: Name, gender, age and class . the second and the last section involved of two main questions, the first question ask about the students view or opinions of cooperative learning, and this question consisted of 5 multiple opinions and these opinion branches out into three various choices which are: yes, no and don't know. in the multiple opinions of the first question the students were voting to the one that he / she find it suitable for him / her throughout the multiple choices: yes, no, don't know.

In the second question of the second section there was a list of different activities that the teacher follows inside the classroom.

The list consisted of 6 major activities that listed belonging to cooperative learning class and the other three activities belonging to traditional taught class . the

student here have to pick up at least 3 activities that he / she find it suitable for him / her .

4- Section Four

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the analysis of the results of the questionnaire in an attempt to improve the hypotheses that is mentioned in chapter one which is the student who participate in cooperative learning class and discussion groups more than those in traditional taught class , and there will be a lot of interest and enjoyment from the students to participate in cooperative learning activities.

So, the following tables show the results in each section of the questionnaire.

4.2.1 Table -1- demographic characteristic of participants

Category	Frequency (n 25)	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	1	4%
Female	24	96%
Age		
20-22	22	88%
23-25	2	8%
26-30	1	4%
Class		
Senior year	25	100%

Table -1- shows that the majority of participants (96%) were female , and only (4%) of participants were male because the number of male more less than the female in English department / fourth stage.

We can notice that the age group in fourth stage varies from (20-23) years old, and only one student at fourth stage with 30 years old.

At the field of class, it indicates that this study and this questionnaire had be done at fourth stage only, that's why we can see at the field of percentage it has (100%), and this rate reveals that all the participants were from the fourth stage at English department .

4.2.2 Table -2- question about students professional view of cooperative learning

Items	Yes		No		Don't know	
	Frequency (n 25)	Percentage %	Frequency (n 25)	Percentage %	Frequency (n 25)	Percentage %
(1) cooperative learning helps me to share my ideas with my group .	24	96 %	0	0 %	1	4 %
(2) cooperative learning encourage me to make social relations with others .	21	84 %	0	0 %	4	16 %
(3) I think that traditional taught class better than the cooperative learning .	0	0 %	22	88 %	3	12 %
(4) cooperative learning helps to raise achievement of students .	24	96 %	0	0 %	1	4 %
(5) cooperative learning provides experiences that develop both good learning skills and social skills .	20	80 %	0	0 %	5	20 %

According to the majority of participants in the 4th stage in English department we noticed that (96%) say (yes) to the first option which is cooperative learning helps to share ideas with group, also (84 %) of participants voted by (yes) to the second option that is related to the cooperative learning class and see that cooperative learning encourage the student to make a social relations with others .

While in the third option which is belong to the traditional taught class non of the participants voted to it. also (96 %) of the participants say (yes) to the fourth option and see that cooperative learning helps to raise achievement of students . in the field of (No), (88%) of participants see that traditional taught class is not better than the cooperative learning class . so, the results of this questionnaire show that the large number of students in each class were voted to choose cooperative learning upon traditional taught class .

4.2.3 Table 3- Question about choosing the activities that students find it more effective than traditional taught activities.

Activities	Frequency	Percent
(1) Group discussion	13	52%
(2) Grammar exercises	1	4%
(3) Work in pairs	4	16%
(4) Explaining text book	4	16%
(5) Sharing ideas	8	32%
(6) Reading dialogue in Front of class		

In table (3) we have group of activities listed in randomly order, we have 6 activities in the table above, each three activities in the table above, each three activities relating to specific class, so we know that the group discussion, sharing ideas and work in pairs are obviously belonging to cooperative learning to traditional taught class.

50, the results of this table indicate that (52%) of students see that group discussion which is relating to cooperative learning class is more effective in learning process, while (32%) of participants choose sharing ideas which is also relating to cooperative learning class.

But (28%) of participants see that reading dialogue in front of class which is relating to traditional taught class is also effective and useful.

Finally we have noticed that (16%) of participants had rotted to both work in pairs and explaining text book.

5- Section Five

Conclusion

As for the tables shown in previous chapter, we noticed that the highest percentage of participants in this questionnaire was from the share of females. As we mentioned, the number of females in the department of English is more than the number of male.

Through the questionnaire, we observed that the majority of students involving in this questionnaire rotted for the activities of cooperative education rather than the ones of traditional or regular education activities. The researcher concluded that cooperative learning is more useful and interesting in this foreign language classroom. In this research we believe that the positive results we have been able to choose the famous definition among the authors which is the instructional use of small group, so

that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. Also, the researched recognized that cooperative learning consists of three kinds: Formal, Informal and cooperative base group.

Finally, cooperative learning is so important for both teachers and students furthermore working co – operatively creates opportunities to :

- share ideas – so each of students have more ideas.
- Work in pairs – to stimulate each other's thinking .
- Learn to deal with challenges and criticism.
- Teaching the students how to establish social relations with others.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

There are no conflicts of interest

6- Abstract

1. Swannson, L. *et al.*, AD, Handbook of learning disabilities, New yourk, Guilford, 2003.
2. Weinder , Cooperative Learning , AD, P.33, A Definition cohn, 2003.
3. Jacobs, G., Cooperative Learning: Theory, Principles, and Techniques. www.georgejacobs.net, 2004.
4. Hermann, K. J., The Impact of Cooperative Learning on Student Engagement: Results from an Interaction. Aarhus University,2013.
5. Adams, A. R., Cooperative Learning Effects on The Classroom . Northern Michigan University, 2013.
6. Johnson et al., Active Learning Cooperation in the Classroom. Interaction Book Company, Edina, MN, 2006.

Appendix

The Questionnaire

Name (optional):.....

Gender :Male\Female

Age:.....

Class:.....

Q1\What is your professional view of cooperative learning ?

(1)Cooperative learning helps me to share my ideas with my group:

(a)Yes

(b)No

(c)Never try it

(2)Cooperative learning encourages me to make a social relations with others:

(a)Yes

(b)No

(c)Don't know

(3)L think that traditionally taught class better than the cooperative learning :

(a)Yes

(b)No

(c) Don't know

(4)Cooperative learning helps to raise achievement of students:

(4)Yes

(b)No

(c)Don't know

(5) Cooperative learning provides experiences that develop both good learning skills and social skills:

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) Don't know

Q2\Which of the following activities are more effective in learning process?

- (1) Group discussion
- (2) Grammar exercises
- (3) Work in pairs
- (4) Explaining textbook
- (5) Sharing ideas
- (6) Reading dialogue in front of class